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Nix

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(54) **METHOD, APPARATUS AND SYSTEM FOR RETROFITTING A VEHICLE**

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CPC **H04L 12/40169** (2013.01); **B60R 21/01** (2013.01); **B60T 7/12** (2013.01); **G06F 13/4282** (2013.01); **H04B 1/3822** (2013.01); **H04L 12/40** (2013.01); **H04W 4/90** (2018.02); **H04W 76/50** (2018.02); **B60R 2021/0027** (2013.01); **H04L 2012/40215** (2013.01); **H04L 2012/40273** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
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See application file for complete search history.

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* cited by examiner

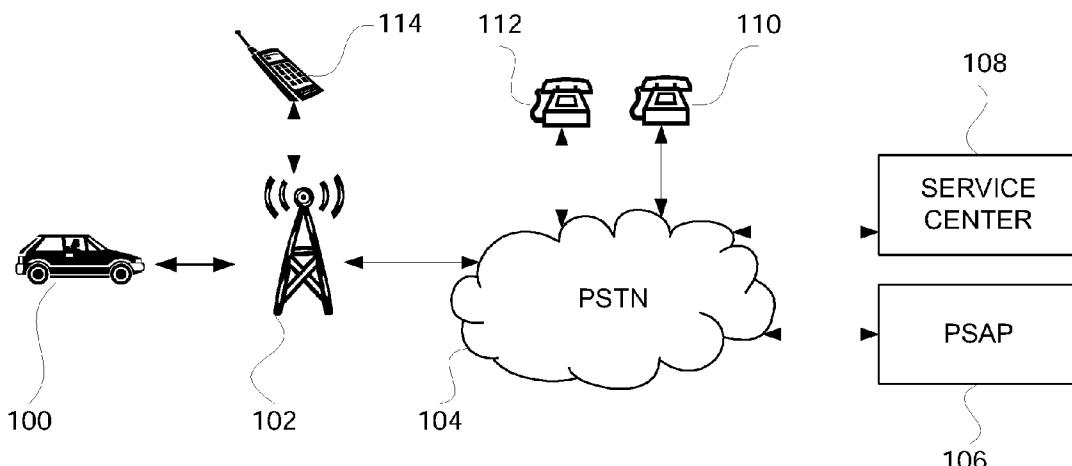
Primary Examiner — Congvan Tran

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ABSTRACT

A system, apparatus, and method for retrofitting a vehicle are presented. The method relates to a vehicle with a factory-installed first apparatus which communicates with a factory-installed second apparatus through a vehicle data bus using a first message. The method includes electrically disconnecting the vehicle data bus between the first apparatus and the second apparatus and electrically connecting a retrofit apparatus to the vehicle data bus. The method further includes transmitting a second message from the retrofit apparatus to the first apparatus which is indistinguishable from the first message.

20 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



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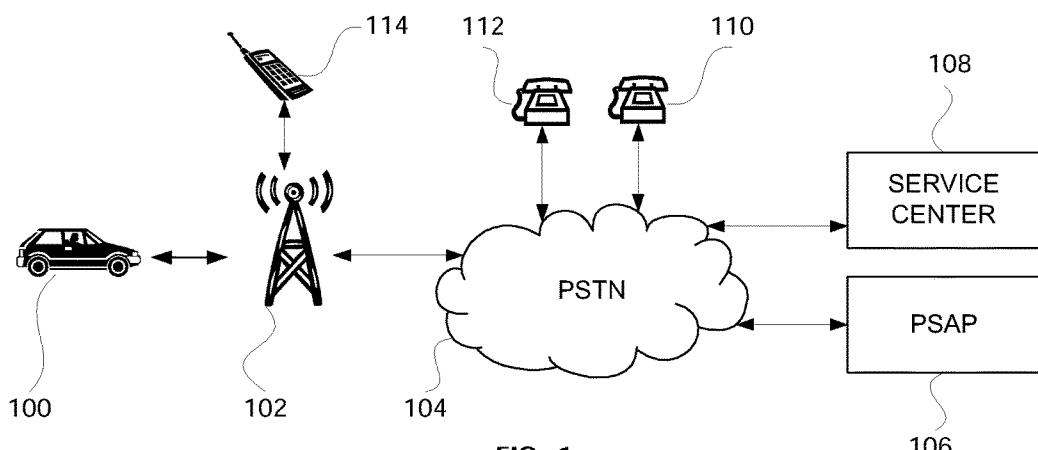


FIG. 1

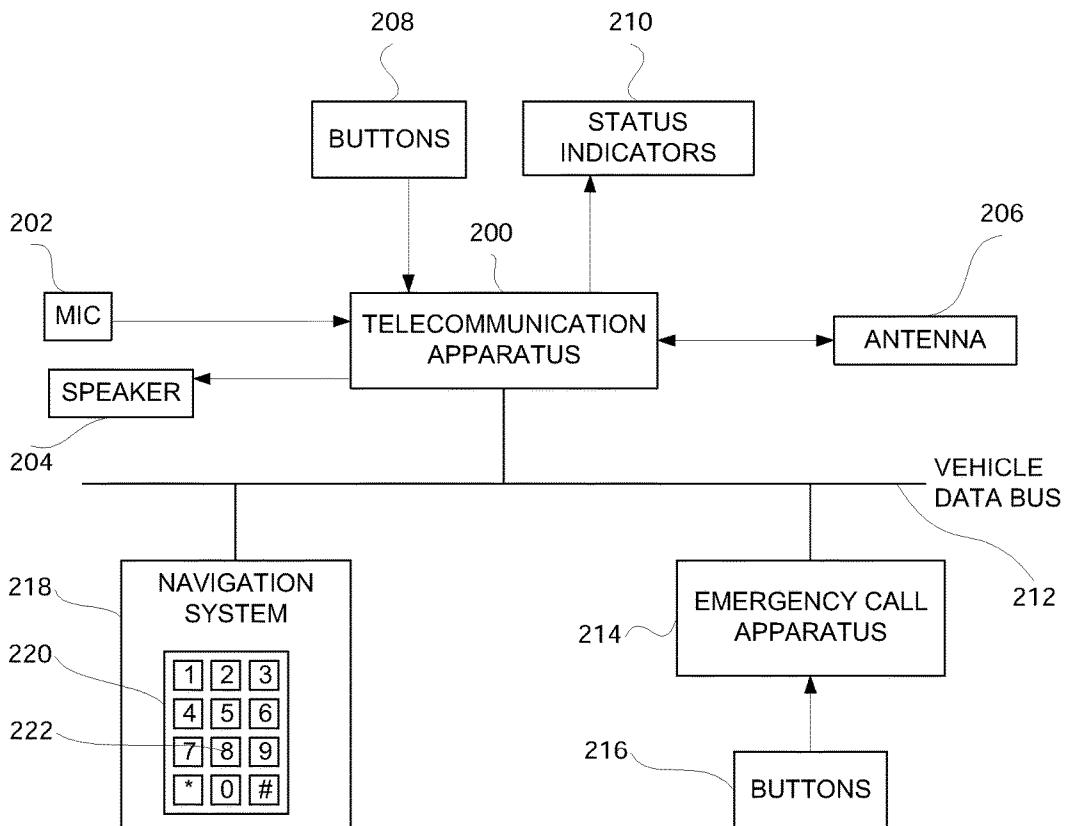


FIG. 2A

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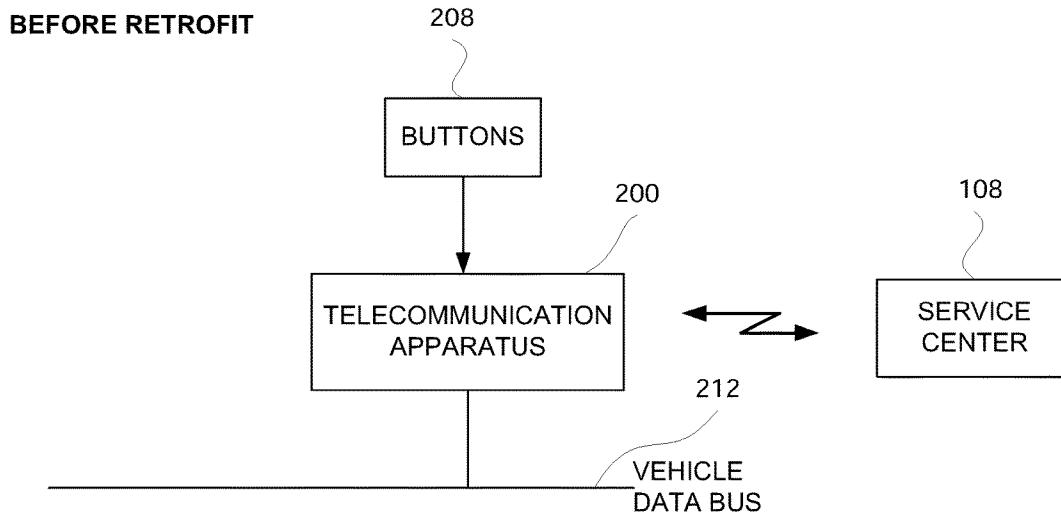


FIG. 2B (PRIOR ART)

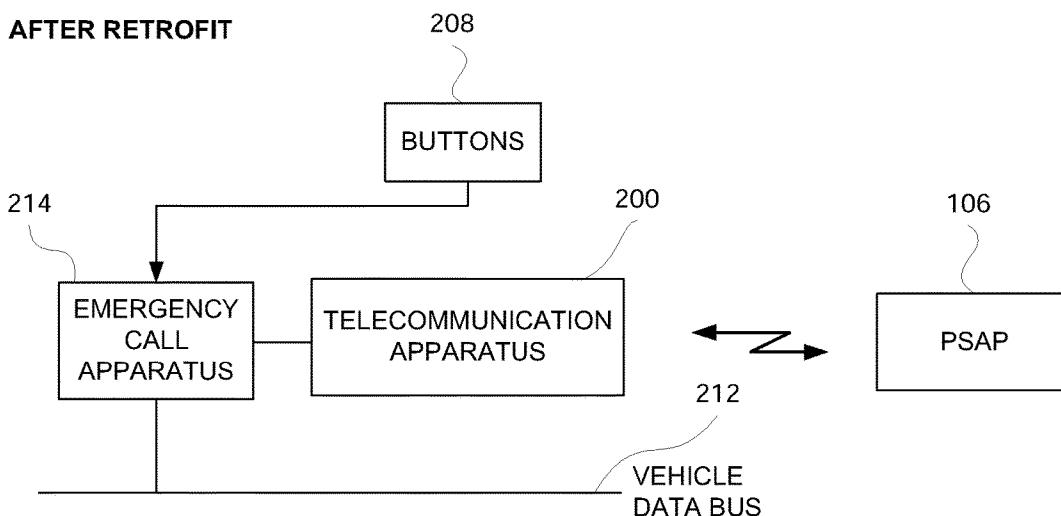


FIG. 2C

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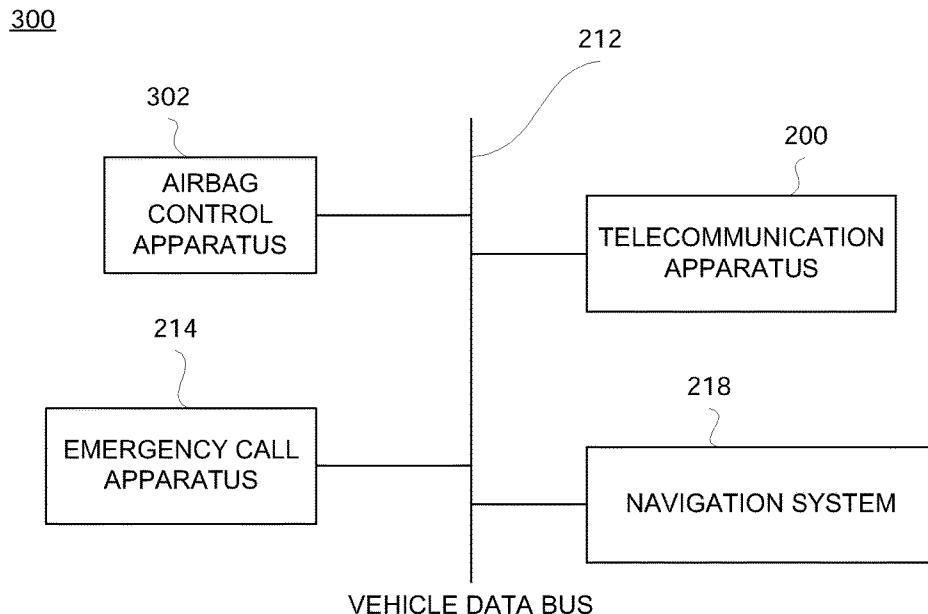


FIG. 3

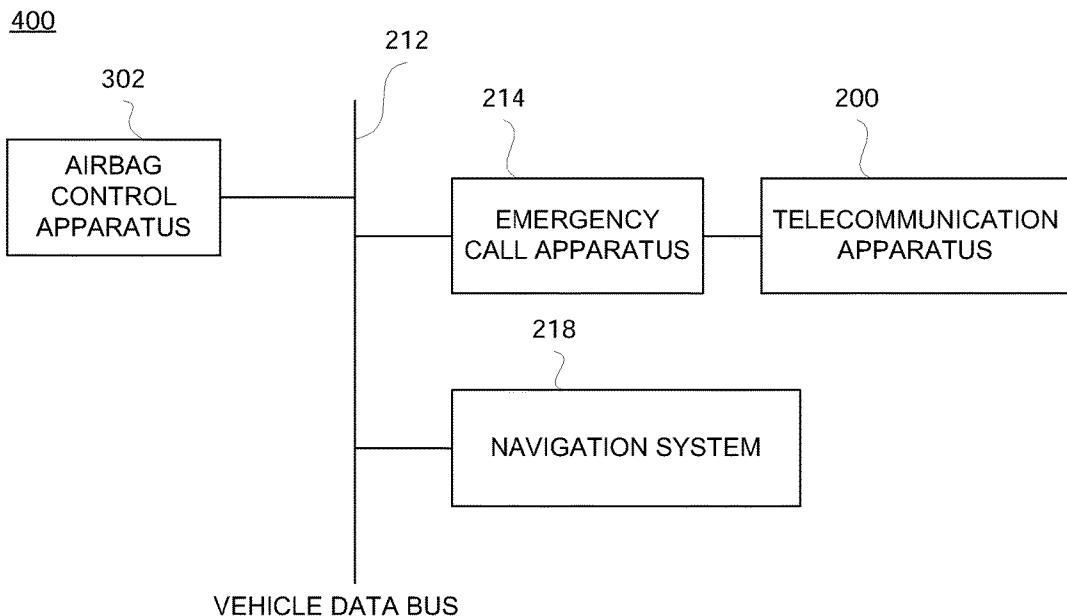


FIG. 4

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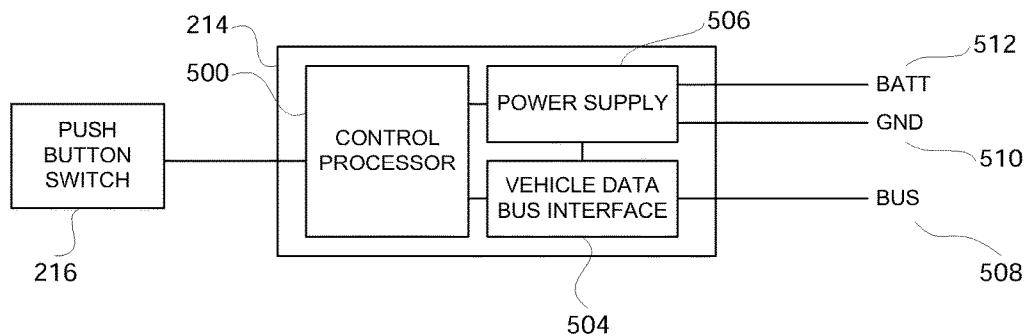


FIG. 5

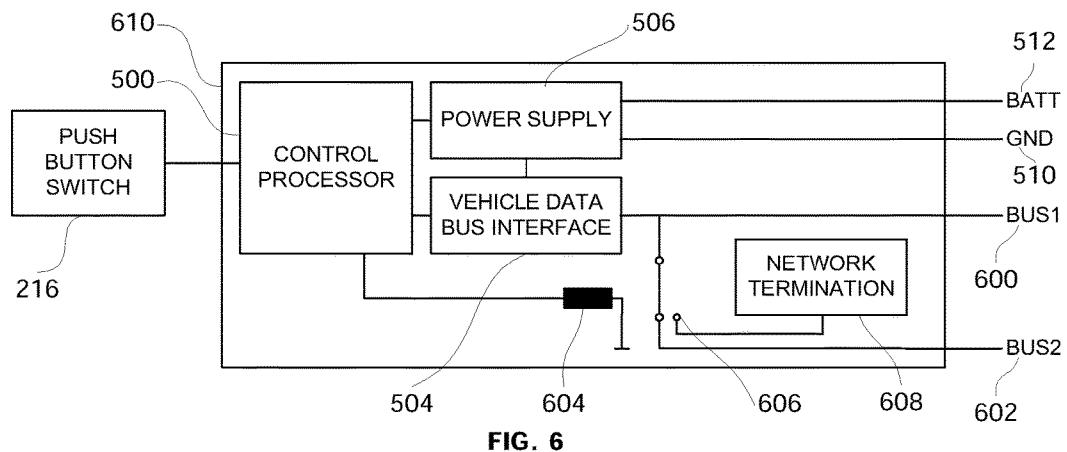


FIG. 6

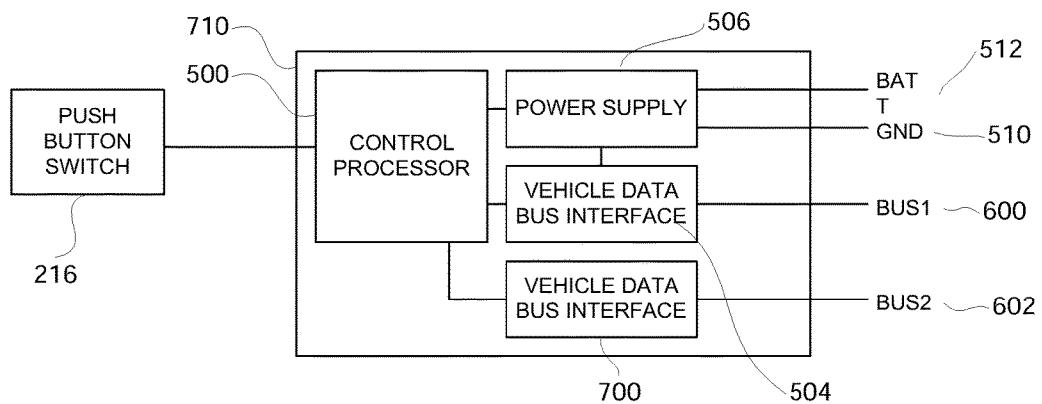


FIG. 7

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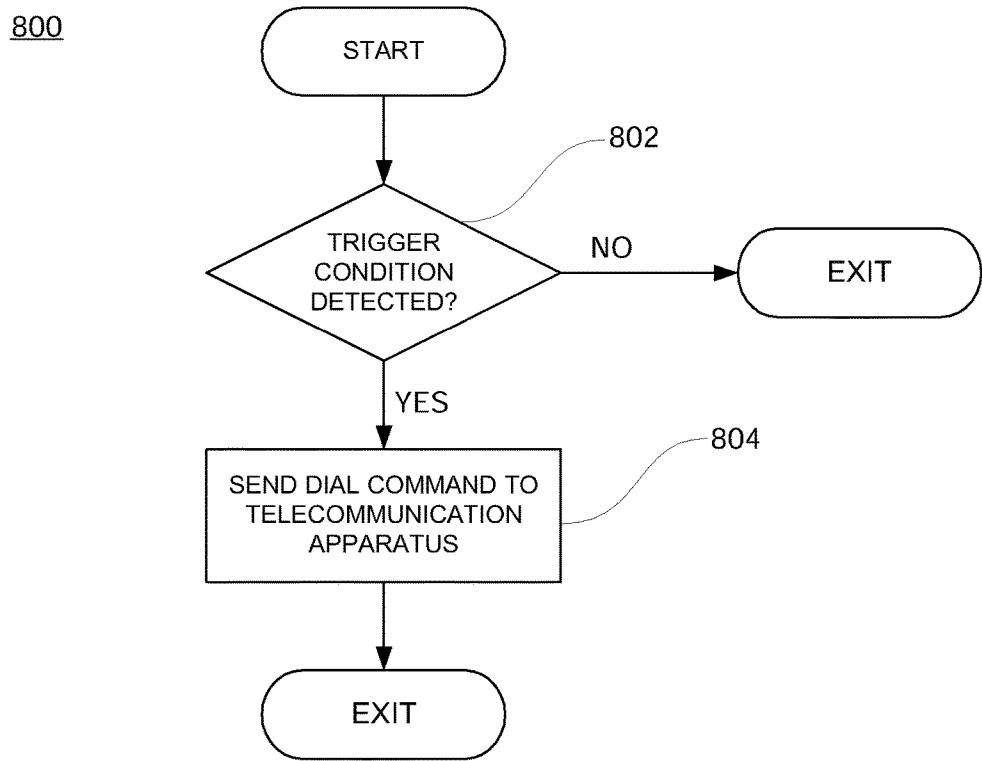


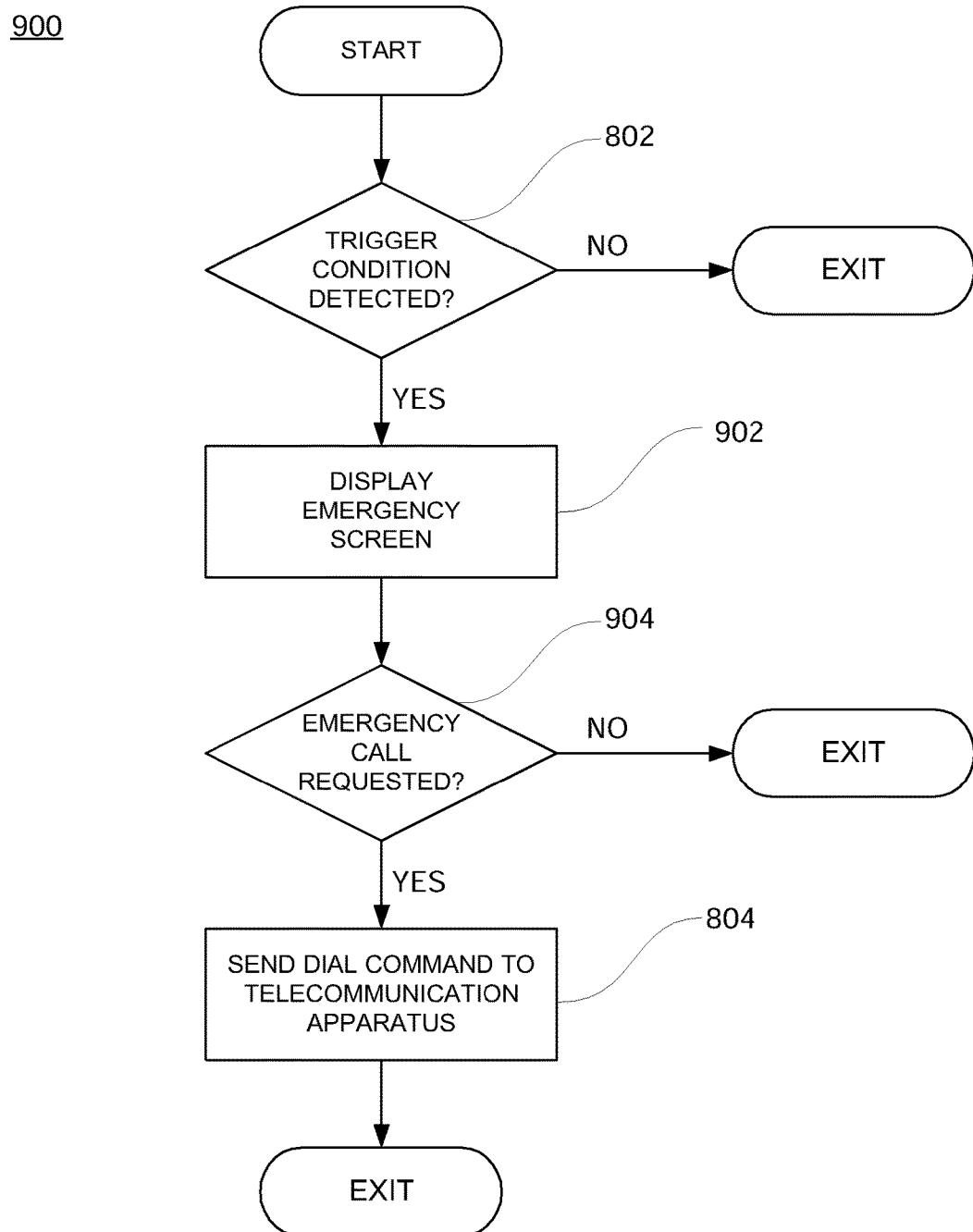
FIG. 8

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**FIG. 9**

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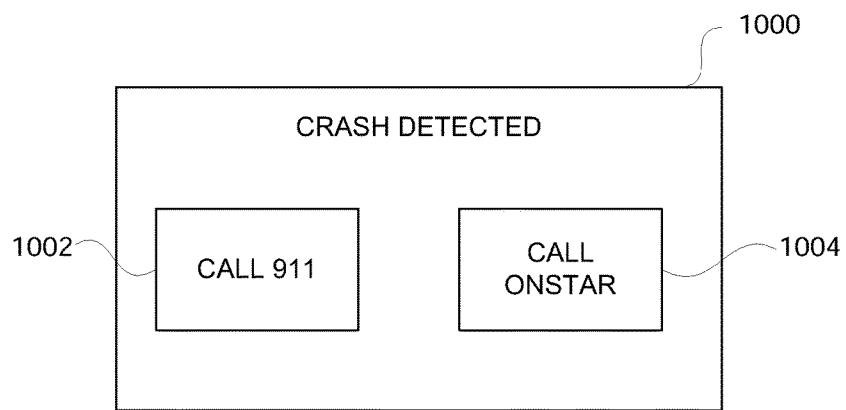


FIG. 10

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METHOD, APPARATUS AND SYSTEM FOR RETROFITTING A VEHICLE

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present disclosure relates to a method, apparatus and system for retrofitting a vehicle.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Being able to easily alert emergency responders in case of an automobile accident is highly desirable. Mobile application service providers (such as OnStar®) address this need for their subscribers by offering an emergency call button located within reach of the driver of an automobile. Upon pressing the emergency call button an emergency telephone call is placed from a cellular telephone which is embedded in the vehicle through a wireless telecommunication network and a public switched telephone network to a service center operated by the mobile application service provider. An emergency call to the service provider may also be initiated automatically, e.g. upon airbag deployment.

In case of an incoming emergency call the mobile application service center silently obtains vehicle position information, e.g. information from a GPS receiver that is also embedded in the vehicle. The mobile application service center as part of an emergency assistance service informs public safety authorities of the emergency and conveys the vehicle's position. The emergency assistance service is typically available only to those who register (for a fee) with the mobile application service provider. Registration with the mobile application service providers includes an underlying registration with the wireless telecommunication network. Several elements of one such system are described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,812,832 (Lobaza), which is hereby incorporated by reference.

The embedded cellular telephone may also be used to place hands free telephone calls. Dialing the embedded cellular telephone may utilize a speech recognition engine that is capable of recognizing spoken telephone numbers or voice tags associated with telephone numbers. To facilitate dialing the embedded cellular telephone may also be connected to an external keypad, e.g. a telephone-style keypad located in the vehicle's dashboard or a virtual keypad displayed on a touch screen display. The external keypad may communicate with the embedded cellular telephone by sending a telephone dial command message through the vehicle communication network. The embedded cellular telephone is accordingly configured to receive telephone dial command messages on the vehicle communication network and establish a telephone call to the requested telephone number.

US law obligates commercial mobile radio service providers to transmit all wireless 911 emergency calls without respect to their call validation process to a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), or, where no Public Safety Answering Point has been designated, to a designated state-wide default answering point or appropriate local emergency authority. The law extends to voice capable cellular telephones embedded in vehicles. An embedded cellular telephone can hence be used in an emergency to directly alert public safety authorities by dialing 911 regardless of registration status with the mobile application service provider or the underlying wireless telecommunication network. However, the user interface provided to dial 911 is inferior to single button activation and may e.g. require use of the voice recognition interface. Changes in an operator's voice during

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an emergency frequently cause the voice recognition engine to fail detecting a spoken "dial 9-1-1" command and thereby preclude the operator from receiving the help he is seeking.

What is therefore needed is a method for combining the benefits of legally mandated free wireless 911 access to a Public Safety Answering Point with the advantageous single button user interface for placing emergency calls to a mobile application service center.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In one aspect of the present invention an integrated vehicle communication system includes a telecommunication apparatus in communication with a vehicle data bus. An emergency call apparatus is also in communication with the vehicle data bus, the emergency call apparatus further providing an emergency call push button switch to initiate an emergency telephone call to a Public Safety Answering Point. When the emergency call push button switch is pressed the emergency call apparatus transmits a telephone dial command message including a telephone number to be dialed on the vehicle data bus. The telecommunication apparatus is configured to receive the telephone dial command and establish communication with the requested telephone number. To initiate an emergency call to a Public Safety Answering Point in the United States the emergency call apparatus may e.g. transmit a telephone dial command message requesting the telecommunication apparatus to dial "911".

In a further aspect the emergency call apparatus may include an input for an external switch. In this aspect the emergency call push button switch may be remote from the emergency call apparatus and may e.g. be located within reach of the driver of the vehicle whereas the emergency call apparatus may be located somewhere else hidden in the vehicle.

In another aspect the emergency call apparatus may be added to the vehicle during a retrofit. In this aspect the vehicle may be originally equipped with an embedded telecommunication apparatus and an emergency call push button switch connected thereto. Before the retrofit pressing the emergency call button is detected by the telecommunication apparatus which responsive to the button press initiates an emergency call to a mobile application service center.

During the retrofit an emergency call apparatus is added to the vehicle. The electrical connection between the emergency call push button switch and the telecommunication apparatus is separated and the emergency call push button switch is rewired and connected to the emergency call apparatus.

After the retrofit pressing the emergency call push button is detected by the emergency call apparatus which responsive to the button press transmits a telephone dial command message on the vehicle data bus. The telephone dial command message may request the telecommunication apparatus to dial the telephone number 911. The telecommunication apparatus responsive to receiving the telephone dial command message establishes a voice call to a Public Safety Answering Point.

In yet another aspect the emergency call apparatus may be configured to detect a trigger condition and responsive thereto request the telecommunication apparatus to establish communication with a Public Safety Answering Point. The trigger condition may be a manual emergency call push button press. As part of an automatic emergency calling system the trigger condition may also be the receipt of one

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or more messages on the vehicle data bus which are reflective of a vehicle accident, e.g. a message signaling airbag deployment. Upon detecting a trigger condition the emergency call apparatus may transmit a telephone dial command message on the vehicle data bus requesting the telecommunication apparatus to dial 911. The telecommunication apparatus responsive to receiving the telephone dial command message establishes a voice call to a Public Safety Answering Point.

In still another aspect the emergency call apparatus may provide an electrically controlled switch to separate the vehicle communication network into two subnets. One subnet may be used to communicate between the emergency call apparatus and the telecommunication device and the other subnet may be used to communicate between the emergency call apparatus and the rest of the vehicle. This aspect can compensate for possible loss of communication on the vehicle data bus after a vehicle crash, e.g. because a wire within the communication network is shorted to ground or battery as a result of the crash. The emergency call apparatus may be configured to detect loss of communication and responsive thereto open the electrically controlled switch, thereby dividing the communication network into the two electrically insulated subnets. In result the emergency call apparatus separates the damaged portion of the vehicle communication network from its connection to the telecommunication apparatus and thereby regains its ability to communicate with the telecommunication apparatus and initiate an emergency call even though communication with the rest of the vehicle is no longer possible.

In yet another aspect the emergency call apparatus may provide two vehicle data bus interfaces wherein the first interface is used to communicate with the telecommunication apparatus and the second interface is used to communicate with the rest of the vehicle. In this aspect the emergency call apparatus acts as a bi-directional gateway between the two vehicle data bus interfaces. Messages which the emergency call apparatus receives through the first vehicle data bus interface are retransmitted through the second vehicle data bus interface. Vice versa messages received through the second vehicle data bus interface are retransmitted through the first vehicle data bus interface. The two vehicle data bus interfaces are electrically insulated from each other such that the emergency call apparatus maintains its ability to communicate with the telecommunication apparatus even if communication with the rest of the vehicle can not be established, e.g. because a communication bus wire is shorted to ground or battery as may happen during an accident.

The following detailed description of the invention is merely exemplary in nature and is not intended to limit the invention or the application and uses of the invention. Furthermore, there is no intention to be bound by any theory presented in the preceding background of the invention or the following detailed description of the invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of an exemplary wireless and a public switched telecommunication network through which emergency calls can be placed from a vehicle to a service center or Public Safety Answering Point.

FIG. 2A is a block diagram illustrating the vehicle portion of a wireless communication system for placing emergency calls used in the vehicle of FIG. 1.

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FIG. 2B is a block diagram showing aspects of a prior art vehicle communication system for communicating with a mobile application service center before retrofit with an emergency call apparatus.

5 FIG. 2C is a block diagram showing aspects of a vehicle communication system for communicating with a Public Safety Answering Point after retrofit with an emergency call apparatus.

10 FIG. 3 is a block diagram illustrating a vehicle communication system showing an airbag control apparatus, a telecommunication apparatus, an emergency call apparatus and a navigation system communicating through a common vehicle data bus.

15 FIG. 4 is a block diagram illustrating an alternative embodiment of a vehicle communication system in which the telecommunication apparatus is connected to the vehicle data bus through the emergency call apparatus.

20 FIG. 5 is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary embodiment of an emergency call apparatus for a vehicle communication system configuration as shown in FIG. 3.

FIG. 6 is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary embodiment of an emergency call apparatus for a vehicle communication system configuration as shown in FIG. 4.

25 FIG. 7 is a block diagram of an alternative embodiment of the emergency call apparatus shown in FIG. 6.

FIG. 8 is a flow diagram illustrating an exemplary method for initiating an emergency call.

FIG. 9 is a flow diagram illustrating an alternative embodiment of the method shown in FIG. 8.

30 FIG. 10 is a schematic diagram of an exemplary touch screen display.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

35 Referring to FIG. 1, there is shown a vehicle 100 featuring a mobile telecommunication apparatus, suitable for use with an embodiment of the invention, and which may be installed in the vehicle or carried into the vehicle by the subscriber. The mobile telecommunication apparatus communicates through a wireless network 102, symbolized by a local telecommunication antenna tower, with a public switched telephone network (PSTN) 104, to which are also connected telephones 110 and 112. Wireless network 102 may also communicate with other wireless telecommunication devices, here symbolized by a wireless telephone 114. The mobile telecommunication apparatus in vehicle 100, which will be described in more detail with reference to FIG. 2A, may include a cellular telephone or any other wireless device that may be registered with a cellular service provider providing general dialing capability in connection with, and operation through, PSTN 104. It may also include a cellular telephone or other wireless device that is not or that is no longer registered with a cellular service provider so long as it provides connection with and operation through PSTN 104 with a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) 106.

40 The telecommunication apparatus carried in vehicle 100 may have been designed to provide access to mobile application services of a service provider such as, for example, OnStar®. Mobile application services are typically provided within a subscription business model, which requires payment of a subscription fee per period, e.g. \$19.95 per month or \$199 per year. The telecommunication apparatus may have been permanently installed in the vehicle at the time of vehicle assembly and the cost of the telecommunication apparatus may have been subsidized by the service provider in anticipation of future subscription revenue if the owner or lessor of vehicle 100 registers for mobile application ser-

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vices. The service provider generally maintains at least one service center **108**, which is connected to PSTN **104** and which the subscriber and other subscribers in other vehicles call for the mobile application services. The mobile application services may include, for example, requests for vehicle location, selection of specific points of interest and directions thereto, and emergency assistance (both requested and automatic), as well as others not named.

If the owner or lessor of vehicle **100** does not register with the service provider, e.g. to avoid the financial burden associated with a subscription, the service provider may refuse to provide mobile application services including emergency assistance. The mobile application service provider may also deactivate the telecommunication apparatus located within vehicle **100**. Deactivating the telecommunication apparatus may include deregistering the cellular telephone therein from wireless network **102** so that the telecommunication apparatus can no longer gain access to wireless network **102** for general dialing and can thus no longer connect to service center **108**.

Even if the telecommunication apparatus within vehicle **100** has been deactivated and the cellular telephone therein been deregistered from wireless network **102** both can still be used to establish a connection to a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). Connecting to a PSAP is independent of a subscription with the service provider or the underlying wireless network **102**. This is, especially in the United States, to comply with federal law mandating free access to a PSAP for all devices used to access a commercial mobile radio service (CMRS).

Referring now to FIG. 2A there is shown wireless telecommunication apparatus **200** in vehicle **100**. The telecommunication apparatus **200** communicates voice and data through an antenna **206** with wireless network **102** and through wireless network **102** with public switched telephone network **104**. The telecommunication apparatus **200** may provide "hands-free" voice communication through a microphone **202** and speaker **204**. The telecommunication apparatus may include a GPS or similar navigation apparatus (not shown) which receives signals through a GPS antenna (not shown) from global positioning satellites and derives therefrom position data (e.g., the longitude and latitude and/or the speed and heading) of the apparatus. The telecommunication apparatus **200** may convert the GPS position information into a transmissible form for subsequent transmission from vehicle **100** to service center **108** or Public Safety Answering Point **106**. Communication between the telecommunication apparatus **200** and service center **108** or PSAP **106** may be voice communication utilizing microphone **202** and speaker **204** and/or data communication the data comprising e.g. GPS location information.

Connected to the telecommunication apparatus **200** are one or more buttons **208** and status indicator **210**. Buttons **208** provide a simple user interface for an operator, e.g. the driver or passenger in vehicle **100**, to interact with the telecommunication apparatus **200**. The buttons **208** may e.g. include a dedicated emergency call button. If the emergency call button is pressed telecommunication apparatus **200** establishes voice and/or data communication with service center **108**. Status indicator **210**, which may e.g. be one or more light emitting diodes or any other form of display, provides feedback to the vehicle operator as to the status of the telecommunication apparatus **200**. Telecommunication apparatus **200** is also connected to vehicle data bus **212** to exchange messages with other electronic modules within vehicle **100** as required.

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Telecommunication apparatus **200** may provide general dialing capability, e.g. to a telephone **110**, **112** within the public switched telephone network **104** or to a wireless telephone **114** through wireless network **102** or any other wireless network. To facilitate dialing telecommunication apparatus **200** may include a voice recognition and activation apparatus, which responds to predetermined spoken data via microphone **202** to perform predetermined functions. It accesses a plurality of voice models stored within telecommunication apparatus **200**. Each voice model includes data permitting recognition of a spoken word or phrase. The voice recognition apparatus compares received spoken data with the voice models in order to recognize those words and phrases which are defined and for performing predetermined actions in response thereto. Some voice models represent commands, such as "menu," "store," "dial," "call," etc. Other voice models represent the digits required for telephone dialing: "one," "two," etc. For example, the apparatus may be programmed to recognize the phrase "Dial 9-1-1 Dial" and respond by placing a call to a Public Safety Answering Point. General dialing capability may be initiated by the word "Dial" followed by the number, digit by digit.

Telecommunication apparatus **200** may also be configured to allow dialing utilizing a keypad which may be connected directly to communication apparatus **200** or indirectly connected to another module which communicates with telecommunication apparatus **200** through the vehicle data bus **212**. In an exemplary embodiment navigation system **218** comprises a touch screen display **220** which displays a virtual telephone keypad **222**. An operator may enter a telephone number he wishes to dial on the virtual keypad **222**. After the telephone number has been entered navigation system **218** transmits a telephone dial command message on the vehicle data bus **212** including the telephone number to be dialed. Telecommunication apparatus **200** responsive to receiving the telephone dial command message establishes voice and/or data communication with the desired telephone number.

Quicker and easier access to dialing 911 and establishing voice and/or data communication with a Public Safety Answering Point is provided by emergency call apparatus **214**, which is connected to vehicle data bus **212** and to one or more buttons **216**. Buttons **216** may include an emergency call push button switch which when pressed causes emergency call apparatus **214** to transmit a telephone dial command message including a telephone number to be dialed on vehicle data bus **212**. Telecommunication apparatus **200** responsive to receiving the telephone dial command message establishes voice communication with the requested telephone number, e.g. 911. Emergency call apparatus **214** and its operation are described in more detail with reference to FIGS. 5 through 9 below.

As is shown in FIG. 2B vehicles equipped with an embedded telecommunication apparatus **200** are typically also equipped with buttons **208**, one of which may be an emergency call button to initiate an emergency call to service center **108**. Buttons **208** and telecommunication apparatus **200** do not serve any useful purpose if the owner or lessor of vehicle **100** does not register with the mobile application service provider. The existing buttons **208** and the telecommunication apparatus **200** may however be used when retrofitting vehicle **100** with an emergency call apparatus **214** at some time after vehicle built.

An exemplary method of retrofitting vehicle **100** is shown in FIG. 2C. Vehicle **100** is retrofitted by adding emergency call apparatus **214**. The electrical connection between but-

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tons 208 and telecommunication apparatus 200 is removed and instead buttons 208 are rewired and connected to emergency call apparatus 214. Optionally the vehicle data bus connection between telecommunication apparatus 200 and vehicle data bus 212 may be disconnected and instead re-routed into the emergency call apparatus 214. A new connection is made between the emergency call apparatus 214 and vehicle data bus 212. Further, emergency call apparatus 214 is connected to vehicle battery and vehicle ground to power emergency call apparatus 214.

To enable the rewiring of buttons 208 the electrical interface between buttons 216 and emergency call apparatus 214 may be identical to the electrical interface between buttons 208 and telecommunication apparatus 200. Using an identical interface, e.g. the same resistor values in case of resistor coded switches, provides that an emergency call button 208 which is connected to and used in combination with telecommunication apparatus 200 before the retrofit can be rewired and used in combination with emergency call apparatus 214 after the retrofit. This simplifies the process of retrofitting vehicle 100 which may have originally been equipped with telecommunication apparatus 200 and buttons 208 but not emergency call apparatus 214 and buttons 216.

Referring now to FIG. 3, there is shown a block diagram illustrating an exemplary vehicle communication system 300 including the telecommunication apparatus 200, an airbag control apparatus 302, the emergency call apparatus 214 and the navigation system 218. As is shown, each system is in communication with the vehicle's data bus 212, which may be a Class 2 or CAN vehicle data bus or any other suitable bus known in the art for electronic data communication.

FIG. 4 illustrates an alternative embodiment of the vehicle communication system 400. In this embodiment telecommunication apparatus 200 is in communication with vehicle data bus 212 using an indirect connection made through emergency call apparatus 214, as will be explained in more detail with respect to FIG. 6 and FIG. 7.

FIG. 5 is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary emergency call apparatus 214. Control processor 500, which may take the form of a programmed digital computer or a custom digital processor, is operatively connected to push button switch 216. Push button switch 216 may be an emergency call button located within easy reach of the driver and labeled prominently, e.g. with a Red Cross icon or the letters "SOS". Push button switch 216 is designed to be easily found and operated by the driver or passenger of vehicle 100 even under stress. Push button switch 216 may be any suitable device that translates a human operator's intention into a signal that can be detected by control processor 500, including e.g. a momentary push button switch, a toggle switch, a rocker switch, a rotary switch or a virtual button on a touch screen display. Control processor 500 is connected to the vehicle data bus 212 through a vehicle data bus interface 504 using an electrical terminal 508. Control processor 500 and vehicle data bus interface 504 are powered by power supply 506. Power supply 506 is connected to the vehicle's power distribution system through vehicle battery terminal 512 and vehicle ground terminal 510. While emergency call apparatus 214 is shown as a stand alone unit it should be appreciated that it may also be integrated within another electronic control module in which case control processor 500, power supply 506 and vehicle data bus interface 504 may be shared with other functions.

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FIG. 6 is an alternative embodiment showing an emergency call apparatus 610 which may be used in the vehicle communication system 400 shown in FIG. 4. In this example the telecommunication apparatus 200 is connected to the vehicle data bus 212 indirectly through emergency call apparatus 610. Electrical terminal 600 connects the emergency call apparatus 610 to the telecommunication communication apparatus 200. Electrical terminal 602 connects the emergency call apparatus 610 to vehicle data bus 212 and through that to all other electronic modules communicating through vehicle data bus 212. Control processor 500 electronically controls switch 606, which may e.g. be an electromechanical relay with coil 604, or any other suitable switching device. Switch 606 is normally closed, creating a short circuit between electrical terminals 600 and 602. In case of a crash the vehicle communication system 400 may be damaged, e.g. may deformation to the vehicle's sheet metal have caused a wire of vehicle data bus 212 to be shortened to vehicle ground or battery, making communication on vehicle data bus 212 impossible. Control processor 500 is configured to detect such damage to the communication system by monitoring its vehicle data bus interface 504. If damage to the communication system is detected control processor 500 restores communication with the telecommunication device 200 by opening switch 606 and thereby disconnecting the damaged part of the vehicle communication system 400 from vehicle data bus interface 504. In its open position switch 606 may cause vehicle data bus interface 504 to be connected to a network termination element 608, simulating a network termination usually present in the now disconnected vehicle communication system. Network termination may consist of a pull-up or pull-down resistor or any other electronic circuit known in the art of electronic communication for terminating communication networks.

FIG. 7 shows another alternative embodiment of emergency call apparatus 710. In this example control processor 500 communicates with telecommunication apparatus 200 through vehicle data bus interface 504 and electrical terminal 600. It is also communicates with other electronic modules connected to the vehicle data bus 212 through a second vehicle data bus interface 700 and electrical terminal 602. Vehicle data bus interface 504 and vehicle data bus 700 are electrically insulated from each other so that damage to the vehicle data bus 212 does not affect the ability of control processor 500 to communicate with the telecommunication device 200 through vehicle data bus interface 504. During normal operation control processor 500 is configured to act as bidirectional gateway between vehicle data bus interface 504 and vehicle data bus 700. Control processor 500 re-transmits any messages it receives from vehicle data bus interface 504 through vehicle data bus interface 700 and any messages it receives from vehicle data bus interface 700 through vehicle data bus interface 504, thereby functionally connecting telecommunication apparatus 200 with vehicle data bus 212.

FIG. 8 is a flow diagram illustrating an exemplary method 800 that may be implemented in process controller 500. Process controller 500 is configured to detect a trigger condition in block 802. The trigger condition may be a manual operator request to initiate an emergency call, e.g. by pressing emergency call push button switch 216. The trigger condition may also be the receipt of a predetermined message or a combination of predetermined messages on vehicle data bus 212. The predetermined message or messages may e.g. reflect that the airbag control apparatus 302 has inflated an airbag in vehicle 100. Other suitable messages that may

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act as a trigger for automatic emergency calling include a message from an object detection apparatus indicating that vehicle 100 was involved in a collision, a message indicating vehicle deceleration above a predetermined threshold or any other message or combination of messages which indicate that vehicle 100 was involved in a severe accident which may have caused the occupants within vehicle 100 to be injured and no longer be able to manually initiate an emergency call.

If the trigger condition in block 802 is detected then in step 804 process controller 500 sends a telephone dial command message to the telecommunication apparatus 200. The telephone dial command consists of or is part of a predetermined message on the vehicle data bus containing a telephone number to be dialed. Telecommunication apparatus 200 is configured to receive the telephone dial command and responsive thereto establish voice and/or data communication through wireless network 102 and PSTN 104 with the desired telephone number. For emergency use in the United States the telephone number requested in step 804 will typically be "911" to establish communication with a PSAP.

As described earlier with respect to FIG. 2B and FIG. 2C emergency call apparatus 214 may be retrofitted into a vehicle 100 at some time after the vehicle has been built. In case of a retrofit telecommunication apparatus 200 may not have been designed for use with the emergency call apparatus 214. In particular, telecommunication apparatus 200 may not have been configured to receive a telephone dial command message on vehicle data bus 212 that is originating from emergency call apparatus 214. Telecommunication apparatus 200 may however have been configured to receive telephone dial command messages on vehicle data bus 212 that are originating from other devices, for example navigation system 218. To operate under these circumstances emergency call apparatus 214 may be configured to mimic the telephone dial command message originating e.g. from navigation system 218. To mimic the dial command message emergency call apparatus 214 uses the same message identifier segment that has been assigned to navigation system 218 when transmitting its telephone dial command message. By sharing the same message identifier segment a telephone dial command message originating from emergency call apparatus 214 and a telephone dial command message originating from navigation system 218 become indistinguishable for the telecommunication apparatus 200. Telecommunication apparatus 200 hence responds properly to a telephone dial command message originating from emergency call apparatus 214 even though it may not have been designed for this purpose. While emergency call apparatus 214 shares the same message identifier segment with navigation system 218 it should be understood that vehicle 100 need not necessarily be equipped with navigation system 218. It is sufficient if telecommunication apparatus 200 is configured to respond to telephone dial command messages on the vehicle data 212 bus irrespective of whether the potential transmitter of such a message is actually present in the vehicle.

Table 1 illustrates the structure of an exemplary vehicle data bus message. As illustrated the message consist of an identifier segment, which in case of CAN messages may e.g. be 11 or 29 bits long, and a data segment carrying the message payload, which may be up to 8 bytes long. To avoid message collision vehicle communication networks usually use unique identifier segments for each transmitting module, if the same message is originating from more than one module. Modules connected to the communication network

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are configured to respond to predetermined messages which are distinguished from other messages by their identifier segments.

TABLE 1

	Identifier Segment 11 bit or 29 bit	Data Segment 0 to 8 bytes						
Example	0x0CF00400	39	31	31	23	FF	FF	FF

To avoid the unlikely but possible collision of two telephone dial command messages issued simultaneously by both the navigation system 218 and the emergency call apparatus 214 the emergency call apparatus 214 may in a vehicle communication system configuration 400 actively prevent such collision. Accordingly control processor 500 in an embodiment as shown in FIG. 6 may in a first step open switch 606 so that the navigation system 218 is no longer connected to the telecommunication apparatus 200 before control processor 500 in a second step transmits its telephone dial command message to the telecommunication apparatus 200. Control processor 500 in an embodiment as shown in FIG. 7 may selectively suppress forwarding a telephone dial command received from the navigation system 218 through vehicle data bus interface 700 while transmitting its own telephone dial command through vehicle data bus interface 504.

FIG. 9 is a flow diagram showing an alternative exemplary embodiment of the method illustrated in FIG. 8. This embodiment is suitable for example for vehicles in which the emergency call apparatus 214 is integrated with the navigation system 218 and where the navigation system 218 is connected to a display. If in step 802 a trigger condition, e.g. an airbag deployment, is detected the emergency call apparatus displays or causes to be displayed an emergency screen 1000 comprising a prominent user interface to activate an emergency call. If in step 904 an emergency call is requested the emergency call apparatus in step 804 sends a telephone dial command to telecommunication apparatus 200.

Finally, an exemplary emergency screen 1000 as may e.g. be used within a touch screen navigation display is shown in FIG. 10. Emergency screen 1000 comprises virtual button 1002 to call PSAP 106 and virtual button 1004 to call service center 108.

While the invention has been described with reference to a preferred embodiment(s), it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes may be made and equivalents may be substituted for elements thereof without departing from the scope of the invention. In addition, many modifications may be made to adapt a particular situation or material to the teachings of the invention without departing from the essential scope thereof. Therefore, it is intended that the invention not be limited to the particular embodiment disclosed as the best mode contemplated for carrying out this invention, but that the invention will include all embodiments falling within the scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method, comprising:
providing a vehicle having a factory-installed first apparatus electrically connected to a factory-installed second apparatus, the factory-installed second apparatus being configured to receive an electrical signal from the factory-installed first apparatus;

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electrically disconnecting the factory-installed first apparatus from the factory-installed second apparatus; electrically connecting a retrofit apparatus to the factory-installed first apparatus and to the factory-installed second apparatus; generating a mimicked electrical signal in the retrofit apparatus independently of the electrical signal from the factory-installed first apparatus; and receiving the mimicked electrical signal in the factory-installed second apparatus.

2. The method as in claim 1, wherein the factory-installed first apparatus is a device which converts a human operator's input into the electrical signal.

3. The method as in claim 1, further comprising receiving an external input in the retrofit apparatus independently of receiving the electrical signal from the factory-installed first apparatus, wherein generating the mimicked electrical signal is initiated in response to the external input.

4. The method as in claim 1, wherein the electrical signal is a variable resistance.

5. The vehicle that has been retrofitted according to the method as in claim 1 after the vehicle has been built.

6. A vehicle, comprising:
a factory-installed first apparatus configured to generate an electrical signal;
a factory-installed second apparatus configured to receive the electrical signal; and
a retrofit apparatus electrically connected to the factory-installed second apparatus, wherein the retrofit apparatus generates a mimicked electrical signal independently of the electrical signal generated by the factory-installed first apparatus, and wherein the factory-installed second apparatus receives the mimicked electrical signal.

7. The vehicle as in claim 6, wherein the mimicked electrical signal generated by the retrofit apparatus is indistinguishable to the factory-installed second apparatus from the electrical signal generated by the factory-installed first apparatus.

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8. The vehicle as in claim 6, wherein the factory-installed second apparatus responds to the mimicked electrical signal generated by the retrofit apparatus as if it were the electrical signal generated by the factory-installed first apparatus.

9. The vehicle as in claim 6, wherein a direct electrical connection between the factory-installed first apparatus and the factory-installed second apparatus has been separated.

10. The vehicle as in claim 6, wherein the retrofit apparatus generates the mimicked electrical signal in response to an external input.

11. The vehicle as in claim 6, wherein the electrical signal is a variable resistance.

12. The vehicle as in claim 6, wherein the factory-installed first apparatus provides a user interface for a human driver of the vehicle.

15. The vehicle as in claim 6, wherein a first electrical interface between the factory-installed first apparatus and the retrofit apparatus and a second electrical interface between the retrofit apparatus and the factory-installed second apparatus are identical.

20. The vehicle as in claim 13, wherein the first electrical interface is a variable resistance interface.

15. The vehicle as in claim 13, wherein the first electrical interface is a CAN vehicle data bus.

25. The vehicle as in claim 6, wherein the factory-installed first apparatus is indirectly connected to the factory-installed second apparatus through the retrofit apparatus.

17. The vehicle as in claim 6, wherein the retrofit apparatus includes a control processor.

18. The vehicle as in claim 6, wherein the retrofit apparatus includes an electronically controlled switch to selectively separate a direct electrical connection between the factory-installed first apparatus and the factory-installed second apparatus.

19. The vehicle as in claim 18, wherein the electronically controlled switch is a relay.

20. The vehicle as in claim 19, wherein the relay is selectively controlled in response to a presence of an electrical failure.

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